

STEWARTIA MALACHODENDRON L. ON DELMARVA VIRGINIA

Clyde F. Reed

The Virginian stewartia, Stewartia malachodendron L. (Stewartia virginica Cav.), lives in moist woods on the coastal plain from eastern Virginia (Accomac County on the Delmarva Peninsula) south to western Florida and then westward to western Louisiana; thence northward to Tennessee and Arkansas.

Tatnall (1946, in Flora of Delaware and the Eastern Shore, p. 175) states that there is "one station, head of Messango Creek, Accomac County, Virginia, Ellis Mears in 1886 (at GH and Acad. Nat. Sci. Phila.); not found in recent years, although carefully searched for".

Last year, while botanizing in Accomac County, Virginia, the author came upon a Mr. L. Floyd Nock, Jr. of Accomac who had found Stewartia malachodendron L. in a woods two miles south of Wachapreague, Accomac County, about 1945 or 1946. At that time he transplanted small plants of this species to slopes (above saline line) along Folly Creek at his home (The Folly), 2 miles east of Accomac. The plants have flourished to be shrubs 10-15 feet tall. Except when the hurricanes forced salt water up on the land and killed those plants nearest the waterline, the rest of the plants have grown well. Some seedlings have come up and are growing fine. The plants in this area bloom about two weeks after dogwood has dropped its blossoms.

Wachapreague is in the southeast corner of Accomac County, whereas Messango Creek is in the northwestern corner, some 25 to 30 miles away. I have searched in the Messango Creek area and have not been able to find the plant, after several hunts over the years. The Gulf Stream Nursery, near Wachapreague, has been propagating this species from seed obtained from Mr. Nock.

Representative specimens from eastern Virginia: Accomac County: woods above saline line, at The Folly, on Folly Creek, 2 mi. east of Accomac. Sept. 11, 1963. Reed 65479-82 (Dupl. in US). Princess Anne County: near Pungo. July 22, 1939. Fernald & Long 10726 (US). Norfolk County: Yadkin, Great Dismal Swamp. June 11, 1940. Fernald & Long 12131 (US).